

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2300

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 4588

FOLLOWING SEND ACTION NEW DELHI INFO BOMBAY, MADRAS AND DACCA
FROM CALCUTTA MARCH 26, 1977 REPEATE FOR YOU

QUOTE
CALCUTTA 0738

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJ: WEST BENGAL AFTER THE ELECTIONS

1. HOME MINISTER TARUN KANTI GHOSH LEFT THE WEST BENGAL
CABINET YESTERDAY, EITHER HAVING BEEN FIRED BY CHIEF MIN-
ISTER RAY (RAY'S VERSION) OR HAVING RESIGNED (GHOSH'S
STORY). THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE WAS A STATEMENT GHOSH MADE
ON MARCH 21 CALLING FOR THE SUSPENSION OF THE SUPERINTEN-
DENT OF POLICE IN THE NORTH 24 PARGANAS DISTRICT AND CHARG-
ING WIDESPREAD RIGGING IN THE MARCH 16 VOTING IN CERTAIN
CONSTITUENCIES. GHOSH COMPLAINED THAT THE SUPERINTENDENT OF
POLICE ARRESTED CERTAIN PARTY WORKERS ON THE ELECTION EVE
AND POLICE UNDER HIS COMMAND ALLOWED VARIOUS TYPES OF POLL
RIGGING. THE BROADER BACKGROUND IS THAT GHOSH AND RAY HAVE
LONG BEEN RIVALS AND GHOSH WAS ONE OF RAY'S MAIN OPPONENTS
IN THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER WITHIN THE WEST BENGAL CONGRESS
LAST YEAR. GHOSH WAS ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE SANJAY
FACTION. FOR THIS HE WAS PUNISHED BY RAY BY BEING DENIED
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PLACES ON THE WEST BENGAL CONGRESS LOK SABHA TICKET FOR HIS
REPRESENTATIVES. GHOSH RETALATED BY ALLOWING HIS PEOPLE
TO RUN AS INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES IN HIS NORTH 24 PARGANAS
FIEF; RAY APPARENTLY STRUCK BACK BY HAVING THE POLICE
ARREST GHOSH'S CAMPAIGN WORKERS.

2. AFTER A BITTER PUBLIC EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE TWO CONCERNING GHOSH'S MARCH 21 STATEMENT, RAY ON MARCH 24 ISSUED AN ORDER DIVESTING GHOSH OF THE HOME MINISTRY. GHOSH CLAIMS HE HAD BY THEN ALREADY RESIGNED, IN PROTEST OVER RAY'S REFUSAL TO TAKE ACTION ON CHARGES OF ELECTION RIGGING.

3. RAY IS ONCE AGAIN DIGGING IN TO DEFEND HIS JOB AS CHIEF MINISTER, THIS TIME BEHIND CONGRESS' THREE-QUARTERS MAJORITY IN THE WEST BENGAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. GHOSH'S RESIGNATION, OR EVEN HIS DEFECTION TO THE CONGRESS FOR DEMOCRACY, WILL NOT MAKE MUCH OF A DENT, THOUGH IF GHOSH IS JOINED (AS HE MAY BE) BY OTHER FORMER SANJAY FACTION LEADERS RAY'S POSITION WOULD BE WEAKENED. BUT RAY'S CHANCES OF SURVIVAL DEPEND MAINLY ON HOW FAST THE NEW GOI ACTS TO REMOVE THE 42ND AMENDMENT AND WITH HOW MUCH DETERMINATION THE OPPOSITION PARTIES PRESS THEIR DEMANDS FOR OUSTER OF THE STATE CONGRESS GOVERNMENT. SOME THINK THE STATE JANATA AND CFD LEADERSHIP WILL WANT TO LET RAY REMAIN INOFFICE, OUT OF FEAR OF A CPM SWEEP AT THE POLLS IF STATE ELECTIONS ARE HELD. OTHERS THINK (AND WE ARE INCLINED TO AGREE WITH THIS VIEW) THAT PRESSURE FOR STATE ELECTIONS WILL BE IRRESISTABLE, WHETHER OR NOT THE 42ND AMENDMENT REMAINS IN FORCE.

4. THE CALCUTTA AREA REMAINS CALM AND SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN ONLY A SLIGHT DETERIORATION IN LAW AND ORDER. A FEW SHOPS HAVE BEEN ATTACKED BY THUGS PURPORTING TO BE JANATA OR CPM WORKERS, AND PEOPLE GET HOME A LITTLE EARLIER IN THE EVENINGS. WE ARE TOLD THAT PROMINENT STATE CONGRESS FIGURES FEAR RETALIATION BUT THUS FAR THERE HAS BEEN NONE. THERE
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HAS BEEN SOME LABOR UNREST - WILDCAT STRIKES AT THE ALLAHABAD BANK AND AT JESSOP'S THIS WEEK AND REPORTEDLY A GHERAO AT THE DUNLOP FACTORY UP THE HOOGHLY FROM CALCUTTA - BUT NOTHING SERIOUS. BUT EMPLOYERS SAY LABOR IS ALREADY MORE MILITANT AND THEY EXPECT WORSE TO COME. HIGH SOCIETY CONTINUES ITS MERRY ROUND OF DINNERS AND RECEPTIONS BUT PEOPLE TALK APPREHENSIVELY OF THE CPM'S COMEBACK AND A POSSIBLE RETURN OF THE DARK DAYS OF 1971.

5. WE WILL HAVE CABLES FOR YOU NEXT WEEK ON PROSPECTS IN BIHAR AND ORISSA. SIGNED KORN
UNQUOTE
SCHNEIDER

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NNN

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